REMARKS

This amendment is responsive to the Office Action of April 10, 2007. Reconsideration and allowance of claims 2-24 is earnestly requested.

The Status of the Claims

Claims 1, 3-18, and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly anticipated by Bergman, U.S. Pat. No. 4,567,894 (hereinafter "Bergman").

Claim 2 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Bergman.

Claim 19 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Bergman in view of Carper et al., U.S. Pat. No. 4,727,328 (hereinafter "Carper").

The Enumerators for Claims 15-20 are Corrected

As filed, claims 15-20 were erroneously enumerated as claims 14-19. The Office Action correctly references the actual claims, and not the erroneous enumerators. Claims 15-20 are amended herein to correct the erroneous enumerators.

The Bergman Reference

Bergman relates to a hydraulically driven dockable table for a magnetic resonance imaging system. Bergman includes a hydraulic motor (72) disposed on the magnetic resonance imaging system that is driven by a remote hydraulic pump disposed in an adjacent control room. The remote hydraulic pump is connected with the hydraulic motor (72) via a length of hydraulic hose connected to an input hydraulic fitting (74). The table includes a hydraulic pump (106) that is driven by the hydraulic motor (72) of the magnetic resonance imaging system via a rotating output shaft (78) that couples with the hydraulic pump (106) via a frictional coupling (80) when the table is docked.

The docking mechanism of Bergman includes a latch hook (58) that is cammed up a wedge (86) mounted on the magnetic resonance imaging system as the table approaches the imaging system until a detent (61) releases a spring (88) that retracts the hook (58) against a hydraulic modulating force provided by a hydraulic

cylinder (92) and fitting (94). The retracting hook (58) catches a pin (56) mounted on the magnetic resonance imaging system to effectuate locking of the table to the imaging system. During approach of the table to the imaging system, pins (96, 98) mounted on the table slide against a cone-shaped guide (24) mounted on the imaging system to guide the table into the correct docking position even if the table is initially misaligned.

Once docked, the hydraulic motor (72) powered by the remote hydraulic pump drives the hydraulic pump (106) of the table by driving the rotating output shaft (78). The driven hydraulic pump (106) charges up a hydraulic accumulator (108) from a hydraulic fluid reservoir (110). The hydraulic energy stored in the accumulator (108) is used to operate a scissor jack assembly (116) to raise the table top, and also is used to operate the hydraulic cylinder (92) to effectuate undocking.

The system of Bergman is a hydraulic system. Indeed, Bergman expressly teaches away from using an electric motor, stating "the table must be constructed from non-magnetic materials. This requirement eliminates electric motors as energy sources to adjust table height. An alternative is to employ hydraulics as the power medium." Bergman at col. 2 lines 16-20. More generally, Bergman teaches away from electrical systems for table operation, stating in regard to monitoring of the table "[t]hese functions must be accomplished without electrical connections between the table and the magnet." Bergman at col. 2 lines 41-43.

The Claims Distinguish Patentably Over the References of Record

Claims 5 and 9 have each been placed into independent form including limitations of canceled base claim 1.

Claim 5 calls for, among other elements, an actuator that cooperates with the latch to bias the movable subject couch into the docked position in response to the docking sensor detecting that the couch has approached the docking position, the actuator including an electric motor and a mechanical energy storage element interposed between the motor and the latch, the mechanical energy storage element cooperating with the latch to bias the movable subject couch into the docked position when the motor is not delivering mechanical energy.

Bergman expressly excludes the possibility of using an electric motor as an energy source for the actuator. Bergman at col. 2 lines 16-20. Accordingly, Bergman does not anticipate claim 1, and indeed teaches away from claim 1.

Claim 9 calls for, among other elements, an electronic controller communicating with the actuator and the docking sensor, the electronic controller operating the actuator to cooperate with the latch to bias the movable subject couch into the docked position in response to the docking sensor detecting the movable subject couch approaching the docked position.

Bergman discloses an LED/phototransistor assembly (60) that is used to provide an indication of positive docking on an operator console display panel. Bergman at col. 4 lines 22-34. However, the assembly (60) is used only for monitoring, and not for control. Rather, as described in Bergman at col. 5 lines 6-21, operation of the actuator to bias the movable subject couch into the docked position is done mechanically, as the detent member (61) is mechanically cammed up the wedge (86) to a point at which the spring (88) is released to retract the latch hook (58). Thus, Bergman does not anticipate claim 9. Moreover, Bergman generally teaches away from electronic control, for example advocating avoidance of electrical connections between the table and the magnet. Bergman at col. 2 lines 41-43.

Claim 18 calls for electromechanically biasing the movable subject support couch into the docked position using the mated latch as a first force anchor. The amendment adding electromechanical biasing is supported in the original specification at least ¶[0043] of the published application US 2006-0167356 A1, which describes how movement of the couch (30) toward the docked position causes the start dock plunger (160) to be pushed in, which in turn causes the controller (200) to switch to the docked state (204) and drive the actuator motor (154) to bias the support couch into the docked position. In contrast, Bergman expressly teaches against using an electric motor as an energy source for the actuator, and hence teaches against electromechanical biasing.

Claims 2-4 have been placed off of claim 5. New claims 21-23 parallel claims 2-4 but depend from claim 9. Claim 13 has been placed off of claim 5, and amended for clarity. New claim 24 parallels claim 13 but depends from claim 9.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that all claims 2-24 are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, an early indication of allowance of claims 2-24 is earnestly requested.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, it is submitted that claims 2-24 distinguish patentably over the references of record and meet all statutory requirements. An early allowance of all claims is requested.

In the event the Examiner considers personal contact advantageous to the disposition of this case, she is requested to telephone Thomas Kocovsky at (216) 861-5582.

Respectfully submitted,

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